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ABSTRACT

This paper examines proposals to integrate regular and special education. It offers an overview of pertinent regular and special education-reform efforts, discusses recommendations for unified schools that include all students, and reviews literature on political culture theory. Elazar's (1966) theory of political culture is used as a framework for analyzing the potential micro- and macro-political effects of creating a unified education system. A conclusion is that throughout the 1980s, the reform of regular education centered on quality and excellence, whereas special-education reform advocated equity through efficient order. The unanswered question of the 1990s appears to be "Are both excellence and equity possible in the schools?" This poses dilemmas of control versus democracy and equity versus excellence. Recommendations for creating a unified school system include promoting dialogue among all stakeholders, understanding political cultures, and carefully examining the underlying values of the current educational system. (LMI)

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Can Regular and Special Education Be Integrated into One System? Political Culture Theory May Have the Answer

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Introduction

For the past thirty years, educational reform has been a hotly-debated topic among regular and special education professionals and policy-makers across the nation. Specifically, the efficiency of special education has increasingly been questioned by the complementary disciplines of special education, regular education, and educational administrators. Their analyses have expressed an uncertainty about the benefits and effectiveness of the traditional model of special education, and public education as a whole (Skrtic, 1991a).

In the 1980's, significant reform efforts have attempted to address some of these questions of efficiency. Sailor (1991) notes that general education has shifted its attention to school organization and governance issues to provide more support for the changing diversity of our nation's students, with special education being one more aspect of this diversity. According to Sailor (1991),

> This shift in emphasis in general education reform presents a window of opportunity for the emergence of a shared educational agenda, one that holds potential for capturing the innovative elements of improvement and reform in federal categorical programs such as special education as well as elements in general education reform. (p. 8,9)

The primary battleground for special education reform efforts have been for equity, whereas the demand for excellence has been the dominant force in regular education reform. Current reform efforts are attempting to merge both equity and excellence. In Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is calling for states to develop a new vision for inclusion in educational reform. The report asserts that such a vision would create school environments that

allow students to reach the high standards which have been promoted by the educational reform movement.

Disagreements over how to structure regular and special education have led to a variety of concerns. These concerns are not limited to a discourse between regular and special education professionals. Special education professionals lack agreement about what practices will best serve the needs of students with disabilities. Due to the increased involvement of parents, businesses, and community members, solutions for solving the dilemma of school reform have been further complicated. In addition, an increasing number of researchers, parents, and educators are beginning to advocate that all students be included in the regular education program, including those labeled as having severe and profound disabilities.

The need to address school readiness issues are beginning to emerge in the dialogue between and among regular and special education professionals. Stainback and Stainback (1989) emphasize that regular education is not yet equipped to adequately meet the unique needs of all students. In order to solve this problem, regular and special educators will need to work as one group, with the goal of "organizing a strong and comprehensive regular system of education that meet the needs of all students" (Stainback & Stainback, 1989, p. 42).

The voice of dissent and disagreement about inclusion and creating a unified educational system appears to be strongest among special educators. Until recently, the voice of regular education professionals has not been heard. The topic of inclusion and possible elimination of special education as a separate educational system is becoming a major concern for multiple stakeholders, particularly at the local school site.

In order to understand the complications inherent in such proposals, an overview of pertinent regular and special education reform efforts will be provided. Recommendations for unified schools that include all students, made by both regular and special education task forces, will be discussed and explained. A review of literature, related to political culture and the merger of regular and special education, will be provided as a framework for understanding and analyzing the potential micro and macro-political effects of creating a unified education system. A discussion of how political culture theory can be applied to the merging of regular and special education will serve as a summary.

The Problem: Merging Regular and Special Education

Overview of Regular and Special Education Reform

The impetus for school restructuring in general education was fueled by external factors impacting the need to improve education. Businesses were disillusioned with the student products they were receiving. A Nation at Risk (1983) brought national attention to the need for educational reform, recommending higher standards for both teachers and students. Closely following in the footsteps of A Nation at Risk were three major national reports: Boyer's High School (1983), Sizer's Horace's Compromise (1984), and Goodlad's A Place Called School (1984). Each of these books supported the need for radical restructuring within schools.

Interestingly, Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987) note that although Boyer's, Sizer's, and Goodlad's reports have direct implications for special education, they have virtually omitted any reference to special education or its place in the educational system. They further state,

In conceptualizing comprehensive school reform,

> it is essential to consider the relationship between general and special education and those problems posed in the special education system as it is currently organized, as well as to identify changes in special education policy that have the potential to result in a more effective and efficient system of general education. It is equally essential to analyze the impact of proposed reforms in general education on students who are currently identified as "handicapped" and are now receiving special education services (p. 295).

Keogh (1988) expresses similar concerns, but focuses on the national reports' unanimous agreement regarding the shortcomings of the schools' educational delivery systems for "regular" students. In light of the reports' findings, Keogh questions if the needs of students with learning and achievement problems can be met by the regular education program.

A reexamination of the benefits of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142, 1975) and special education practice has closely paralleled the analysis of school effects and the need to reorganize schools that are recommended in the national reports. Sapon-Shevin (1987) suggests that both regular and special educators and researchers should study the changes that have occurred as a result of P.L. 94-142, and take inventory of where special education has been and where it should be going. Public Law 94-142 requires that all children, regardless of disability, be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that is most appropriate to their educational needs. The LRE's basic premise is that every child, to the maximum extent possible, should be educated with children who do not have disabilities (Sailor, Anderson, Halvorsen, Doering, Filler, & Goetz, 1989).

The major problem recognized in the implementation of P.L. 94-142 has been that it "characterizes the disability as inherent in the individual and thus formulates two separate categories of people, handicapped and

nonhandicapped" and "provides the rationale for educating students with handicapping conditions in separate programs, and even in completely separate systems" (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987, p. 367, 368). According to Bickel and Bickel (1986), the outcomes of most special education programs contradict the best practices for teaching behaviors, organization of instruction, and instructional support.

Three traditional approaches for organizing instruction have evolved from the implementation of P.L. 94-142: 1) the withdrawal or "pull-out" approach; 2) the remedial approach, advocating specific intervention strategies to overcome student difficulties; and 3) the mainstreaming approach, emphasizing curriculum modifications, individual learning programs, and additional staff support for the child (Ainscow, 1991). Rather than considering external factors as causing the problem in learning, each of these approaches operate on the assumption that the learning problem belongs to the child. By maintaining the perspective that some students are "special," these traditional approaches can work to the students' disadvantage in the following ways:

1. the segregation and labeling process has adverse effects on the attitudes and expectations among students, teachers, and parents (Ainscow, 1991; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; National Council on Disability, 1989);
2. the existence of "specialists" encourages regular teachers to pass their responsibility for educating the "hard to teach" on to others (Ainscow, 1991);
3. resources are channelled into separate programs rather than

used to provide more "flexible and responsive forms of schooling" (Ainscow, 1991, p.3);

4. educational experiences for "special students" are characterized by a watered-down curriculum, narrow opportunities, and low levels of achievement (Ainscow, 1991; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987);
5. Students are unprepared for transition to "normal" world of work and society.

The outcry against these traditional approaches and their negative effects led to a movement to end labeling and the institutionalization of special education as a separate educational system. More than ten years after the passage of P.L. 94-142, a second policy initiative, called the Regular Education Initiative (REI) was announced. The proposal to merge regular and special education into a "partnership" was proposed by Madeleine Will (1986), Assistant Secretary of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Will argued for a shared responsibility and commitment to the educational needs of all students. The major purpose of the REI is to create a unified system of regular and special education. The REI sought to place fewer students with disabilities in "pull-out" programs and educate them in their regular education settings.

According to Stainback and Stainback (1989), however, the REI "focuses on students with mild and moderate disabilities and does not address the need to include in regular classrooms and regular education those students labeled severely and profoundly handicapped" (p. 43). Furthermore, rather than creating a unified special and regular education program that is designed to

operate as a single system with the same goals, the REI "encourages collaboration between special and regular education as distinct groups" (Stainback & Stainback, 1989, p.43)

In a review of literature on the REI and special education effectiveness, Skrtic (1991) found that both opponents and supporters of REI agreed that there were no significant benefits to special education treatment. On the other hand, many insisted that present practices should continue, since funding has been associated with these patterns and resources are necessary if the problems are to be solved.

Clearly, there are opposing views about how regular and special education should treat issues concerning school reform, restructuring, and the education of all students. Sailor (1991) notes that until recently, most school reform has focused on the parallel efforts of special and general education and have had little significance for one another. Instead, a greater separation between the two groups of educators may have resulted. Lilly (1987) contends that as long as special education is treated as a separate, isolated system for delivering educational services,

> it will not be a part of the scholarly approaches to educational reform. . . . when the special education system itself is "reformed," it should no longer seek its own "niche" in the reform literature, but rather should be seen as a productive element of general education (p. 326).

In February, 1990, the governors and former President Bush met to determine the nation's educational goals. The six national goals that emerged encompass "all" individuals, from birth to adulthood:

Goal One: All children in America will start school ready to learn.

Goal Two: The high school graduation rate will increase to at least

90 percent.

Goal Three: American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal Four: U. S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal Five: Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal Six: Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (U. S. Department of Education, 1991).

Formerly referred to as America 2000, the new Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, announced on March 9, 1993, that a new name and focus would drive the Education Department's efforts to assist schools and communities in achieving the six national education goals: Goals 2000: Educate America (U. S. Department of Education, 1993).

Recommendations for a Unified Education System

In response to how special education can fit into the six national goals, the former Assistant Secretary, Robert Davilla (1991) stated that "special education and rehabilitation should play a leadership role" (p.5), and offer models "that will improve educational outcomes for all Americans" (p.5). At

the 71st Annual Council for Exceptional Children National Convention (April 4, 1993, San Antonio, Texas), Stevan Kukic, Director of Special Education for the Utah State Department of Education, stated that the six goals set the stage for special educators to achieve what is important for students with disabilities, stressing "all means all." The need for strategic action, a unified vision, and a collaborative effort towards inclusion was also emphasized. Inclusion was defined as a "value which promotes a single system of education dedicated to achieving appropriate post-school outcomes for all students" (Kukic, April 4, 1993, San Antonio, Texas).

In order to understand the complex issues facing special education and the overall education reform movement, NASBE (1992) conducted a study based on the premise that "all children *can* and *will* learn" and determined that the "dual special education/general education bureaucracies that exist today in most states have hindered collaboration between special and general educators" (NASBE, 1992, Preface). The report states the belief that the education system should make the necessary changes to make public schools more responsive to the needs of all students.

The first recommendation (NASBE, 1992) is that state boards of education (SBOE) should develop a new vision for education in their states that includes all students. Educational goals and policies should include students with disabilities. They determined that the creation of an inclusive system, striving to produce better outcomes for all students, was the next step to be taken. Furthermore, the report stated,

> Another key role of state boards is to ensure that national education reform agendas reflect the needs and abilities of *all* students. . . . As policy making boards at the state level committed to the dual goals of equity and excellence in the education system, state boards must create a new vision of

> inclusion in the national education reform arena; national reforms impact *all* of the students in their states. State boards must ensure, through the way their policies structure the overall education system in their state, that students enter educational environments *every day* that enable students to reach the high and rigorous standards that are the cornerstone of the education reform movement. (NASBE, 1992, p. 22, 23)

In January, 1993, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) released a discussion draft, A Leadership Initiative for Improving Special Education Services in Texas. The document states that the initiative is not a rule or mandate, but intends to "move the state toward a unified, integrated and supported educational system to increase student achievement and promote excellence and equity for students with disabilities at the pre-kindergarten, early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school levels" (TEA, 1993, v).

Several months later, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE, 1993, April) released their draft, CASE Future Agenda for Special Education: Creating a Unified Education System. A familiar statement from previous discussions among special education reform advocates emerges: "Most of the educational research suggests a lack of efficacy in a separate system. If segregation does not assist students in better meeting their educational outcomes, then why promote such a system?" (CASE, 1993, p. 9). A unified system is endorsed as creating one educational system that will support the educational needs of all students.

The success of a unified, inclusive school program depends heavily on the attitudes and beliefs of every educator within the school and school district. CASE succinctly summarizes the requirements for inclusion to work and its subsequent benefits:

> For a unified system to be successful, all educators must believe that *all* students can learn and they, as educators,

> are capable of teaching *all* students. . . . *All* students share a common environment and belong. Students learn through everyday experience to accept and hopefully value differences in others. The sooner students become immersed in this type of system, the quicker problems of a dual system will be eliminated (CASE, 1993, pp. 9, 10).

According to these guidelines, local leadership must examine its position and develop "a vision of effective schools for all students, especially those with diverse learning needs" (CASE, 1993, p. 3). To determine how student outcomes can be met for every student, negotiations among school faculty, principals, and the local community will be necessary. Staff development on how to work collaboratively and share professional expertise will also be needed for school personnel, boards of education, supervisors, state department staff, parents, and other community members (CASE, 1993).

Clearly, the creation of a unified education system involves multiple constituencies and a reexamination of attitudes and values. As the change process proceeds, new problems and conflicts will most likely develop. How will regular and special education professionals, administrators, parents, and community members react? What are some of the ramifications that will occur as school organizations attempt to fulfill the new initiatives?

To address all of the possible problems that could occur are beyond the scope of this paper. As educational administrators and policy analysts, however, a theoretical framework that can assist us in planning, decision-making, and minimizing the negative effects of changing to a unified school system is essential. Political culture, when related to institutional and individual subgroups, is a useful tool for understanding the potential effects of inclusion, both at the macro and micro-level of analysis.

Political Culture

Definition of Political Culture

Kincaid (1982) defines political culture as a subset of general culture. The general culture is composed of traditional ideas that have been historically derived and selected, and have specific values attached to them. These traditional ideas become a "set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system" (Pye, 1968). Political culture is rooted in the "cumulative historical experiences of particular groups of people" (Elazar, 1972, p. 89). In many cases, individuals are socialized to behave and believe in accordance with the dominant values of a particular society. Eventually, political culture becomes "second nature," governing organizational and individual behavior without self-conscious reflection (Kincaid, 1982).

According to Kincaid (1982), political culture helps shape how individuals and/or organizations view the following: a) the nature, purposes and principles of policymaking; b) the policies and rationales that are chosen; c) the "goods" or resources that are attained through policy choices; d) which individuals or groups are worthy of participating in various aspects of the political process; e) the types of citizen demands and issues that are raised or suppressed within the political community; and f) the "rules of the game" that are allowed or tolerated in the organization. Kincaid (1982) further notes that it is important to realize that political culture is interacting with other socioeconomic and structural variables. By no means, however, is political cultural a residual category. Kincaid (1982) states

> If politics is the authoritative allocation of values and a struggle over who gets what, when, and how, then, in many respects, political culture may be logically prior to the other factors because the political structures established by peoples and the socioeconomic characteristics assumed by groups and individuals over time reflect, translucently perhaps, the values they have sought to allocate authoritatively (p. 7).

If we are to understand how values are influenced by other variables, we must link these variables to political culture and ideology (Kincaid, 1980). For our purposes, political culture, in theory and practice, can be used to examine and consider three areas related to creating a unified educational system: 1) institutional and individual behaviors and policy outcomes; 2) efforts to transform cultures through innovation and change; and 3) attempts to preserve the current culture by resisting change and maintaining the status quo.

Elazar's Political Culture Theory

More than two decades ago, Daniel Elazar (1966) advanced a typology of three types of American political culture, linking historical migrations and religious preferences of people to distinctive locations in the United States. Elazar's (1966) theory views the American political system as a "partnership" of governments, publics, and individuals, and characterizes American federalism as both independent and interdependent. Within this cooperative system of federalism in the United States, the fifty states operate and respond differently to the cooperative system (Elazar, 1972). According to Elazar (1972), in order to understand how states respond, two sets of relationships must be understood: 1) the way states operate as political systems will influence the way the general government operates, and 2) states will adapt certain federal programs to fit their own needs and interests.

This idea of partnership extends beyond federal and state government relationships, and is the "guiding principle in most of the political relationships that tie institutions, groups, interests, and individuals together" (Elazar, 1966, p. 2, 3). According to Elazar, "partnership implies the distribution of real power among several centers which must negotiate cooperative arrangements with one another in order to achieve common goals" (p. 3).

Amidst the interacting and conflicting forces of independence and interdependency that are inherent in partnerships, the United States "shares a general political culture that is rooted in two contrasting conceptions of the American political order" (Elazar, 1966, 1972). The first view characterizes the political system as a "marketplace" in which individuals and/or groups bargain over self-interests. The second view conceptualizes the political system as a "commonwealth" in which the entire group, rooted in shared interests and goals, cooperates to "create and maintain the best government" and "implement certain shared moral principles" (Elazar, 1972, p. 91).

These two views of the political system form a set of four value concepts which, when combined, "provide the framework within which the value orientations of the American people are shaped while the differences in emphasis in the interrelationships among them reflect the various subcultures in the United States" (Elazar, 1972, p. 91). The four values are efficiency, commerce, agrarianism, and legitimacy. Efficiency connotes the ability to achieve certain goals with the least amount of resource waste or expenditure. Commerce involves the exchange of goods, services, and ideas. It is valued as an efficient method for organizing and utilizing power, promoting the "marketplace" ideal, protecting certain freedoms, and fostering enterprise.

Legitimacy operates with the ideal of agrarianism, and exists when the underlying values and aspirations of a citizenry are supported. In this sense, each participant is self-governing, has a stake in the outcome, and is motivated by informed and moral attitudes toward humanity.

These four values operate within the context of two political variables, power and justice. Power and justice encompass the concern by societal groups of "who gets what, when, and how." Efficiency and commerce are related to the concern for power and management; legitimacy and agrarianism are related to achieving justice, and are expressed through ongoing efforts to "create a more just society" (Elazar, 1972, p. 92). How a particular group conceptualizes and uses power and justice helps define the political culture. According to Elazar (1972), three political subcultures emerge from the influences of the marketplace and commonwealth: traditionalistic, individualistic, and moralistic.

The traditionalistic political culture views government as necessary for maintaining order. It is dominated by an elitist conception of power in which "hierarchical social relationships are valued, and the status quo is to be protected via the political process" (Baker, 1990, p. 598). Programs that benefit the elite are the most likely to be considered.

The individualistic political culture views government as a marketplace and exists for utilitarian purposes, "to handle those functions demanded by the people it is created to serve" (Elazar, 1972, p. 94). Norms of specialization and professionalization limit citizen participation. Politics is viewed as a business, run by professionals. New programs are normally not initiated without public demand. According to Elazar (1972), political life is based on a "system of

mutual obligations rooted in personal relationships" and is "dedicated to providing the organization necessary to maintain it" (p. 95).

The moralistic political culture views government as a commonwealth in which everyone participates. Power is shared by all, and strives to attain goals that will benefit everyone. The fundamental concept is that "politics exists primarily as a means for coming to grips with the issues and public concerns of civil society" and is, therefore, "a matter of concern for every citizen" (Elazar, 1972, p. 97). Due to the community emphasis on involvement, the moralistic political culture tends to favor local government action over outside intervention.

Utility of Elazar's Theory of Political Culture

Elazar (1966) contends that when analyzing any political issue, two questions should be considered: 1) What kinds of issues are raised? and 2) How are these issues developed and resolved in the political system? Furthermore, Elazar (1966) provides seven points as a framework for analysis:

1. the essential character of the problems raised by each concern;
2. the essential distribution of authority and power between two governmental entities;
3. the essential operational relationships between the two;
4. the essential subareas or subconflicts, if they exist, within each area;
5. the essential position that is taken, relevant to a concern within any subarea;
6. important interests that are aligned on various sides;
7. any special considerations that should be included when analyzing the specific issues involved.

This framework can be applied to organizational, and individual/group political cultures. Each political culture consists of certain dominant interests. Although dominant interests may not be reflective of the entire political culture, the dominant interests of any culture "act as if" they have consensus

of beliefs. In this sense, the development or resolution of certain issues, in the face of outside pressures, will depend primarily on those who are in power.

In any change process, as is the case in school restructuring and the initiative for creating a unified, educational system, the dominant group is striving to maintain internal unity. Specifically, interpretation and application of certain national standards, mandates and/or guidelines are left to the individual states, communities, organizations, and individuals/ groups. The decision of how to interpret and apply these standards and guidelines, then, is based on the dictates and "rules" of the respective political culture. Implementation, then, is determined by "street-level bureaucrats" (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977) who find ways to accomplish their assigned tasks within the context of the organization.

When compliance is necessary, intervention by a "higher power" may occur. Intervention is limited and temporary, however, and self-restraint is used in the exercise of that authority. Elazar (1966) notes, however, that a major victory in changing the political culture is not marked by the strength of one power over another. Only when the dominant group realizes that its present values and practices are ineffective will a true victory be won. When consensus on the values and beliefs is achieved, the political culture can settle back into its normal operation.

Although Elazar's theory focuses on the state political cultures and how they have emerged over time, many of its components and underlying assumptions can be used to understand the rationale behind why federal and state educational reform efforts are leaning towards the creating a unified educational system. Since Elazar's work on political culture in the 1960's and 1970's, however, other studies that are related to culture and political behavior

have emerged in the literature. These studies have specifically examined political cultures as they exist within institutions, formal and informal groups, and individuals.

As educational administrators, our primary interest is more likely to be related to how stakeholders of the local school district and individual school site might react to an educational mandate or initiative to change the current structure of regular and special education. Alternative theories that will help us to predict possible outcomes, prepare for the change process, and make decisions that may reduce conflict between and among the constituents of the school culture are necessary.

Alternative Theories Related to Organizations, Groups, or Individuals

In his discussion of political culture, Wilson (1992) uses the term, "ideology." He defines ideology as a "system of communication using a common language and providing common categories of thought" (p. 18). In a broader sense, Wilson (1992) views ideology as a "systematized, integrated, relatively inflexible and authoritative set of opinions, attitudes, and values that touch a number of different ideas of social life" (p. 18,19). An ideology is a set of ideas that describes and explains the way things ought to be. According to Wilson (1992), ideologies defend social institutions and rationalize group interests, even when inconsistencies exist.

In certain cases, ideologies justify compliant behavior. When a "compliance ideology" is operating in an organizational context, it "bolsters stable institutional arrangements by explaining, justifying, and prompting support for a particular stratification system whose failure or demise will lead to the disintegration of a particular pattern of control" (Wilson, 1992, p. 19).

Besides maintaining the status quo, however, compliance ideologies can function to meet the needs of a large cross-section of society. They combine institutional relationships with a sense of justice, "engendering a sense of fairness that is as important for the disadvantaged as it is for elites" (p. 20). According to Wilson (1992), compliance ideologies connect values with the context of an institutional setting.

In order to address how political culture relates to individual and institutional subgroups, Wilson (1992) states

> Although broad classifications of have and have-not may surely be discerned in any society, it is actual institutional contexts that tell us about the nature of hierarchy, the needs of elites and subordinates, and the nature of social contention. In these contexts, especially, political culture is vital and immediate. It stipulates the meaning of relationships and defines the purposes of individual and institutional existence. The institutional context is viewed as the determinant of hierarchy, the needs of elites and subordinates, and social conflict. Political culture is used to explain the relationship and purpose of individual and organizational existence and interaction (p. 12).

Institutions are defined as subgroups, formal or informal, that have a set of interacting roles which are designed to achieve specific goals (Wilson, 1992). To meet these goals, certain constraints on individual behavior are set by the institution. Implicit in the determination of these "behavior rules" are power structures and relationships. The rules "standardize" behavior in an institution with diverse members. Furthermore, the rules define how members are organized to achieve specific goals and provide legitimacy to ongoing institutional arrangements.

Wildavsky's (1987) cultural theory supports Wilson's analysis of how institutions influence individual behavior. Culture theory claims that individual preferences or values are formed through social interaction and

institutional arrangements. Values and social interaction are inseparable because one rationalizes the other. According to Wildavsky (1987),

> what matters most to people is their relationships with other people and other people's relationships with them. . . . the major choice made by people (or, if they are subject to coercion, made for them) is the form of culture - shared values legitimating social practices - they adopt. An act is culturally rational, therefore, if it supports one's way of life (p. 6).

Interestingly, Wildavsky (1987) categorizes the dimensions of cultural theory by answering two questions: "Who am I?" and "What shall I do?" (p. 6). Answers to these questions determine how strong group boundaries and rules influence individual behaviors: a) strong groups with numerous prescriptions for behavior form a hierarchical elite; b) strong groups with a minimal number of rules form an egalitarian culture; c) when both group boundaries and prescriptions are weak, competition and individualism is strong; and d) when prescriptions are strong and groups are weak, causing decisions to be made from them by outside forces or individuals, the culture is controlled, apathetic and fatalistic.

Before institutional rules can be changed, the compliance ideologies that dictate the rules must be altered. In order to analyze how and why change occurs, Wilson (1992) emphasizes the need to examine factors related to both individual or group, and organizational behaviors:

> In seeking reasons for changes in compliance ideologies, therefore, we must look both at the human factor - and at underlying changes in institutional arrangements that lead to incongruities with people's expectations. . . . People's views about institutional arrangements change when they are able to conceptualize those arrangements in a new way. . . . for reasons that are partly innate and also partly due to education and the nature of personal experiences, the ways in which people overall view social arrangements do alter as institutional patterns change (p. 22, 23).

Inherent in Wilson's (1992) discussion of what motivates the change in a particular ideology is the concept of values and morality. He states

> When law protects the interests of some at the expense of others in a way that has become repugnant, then the compliance ideology is compromised as a mechanism for reducing institutional transaction costs. Although this type of situation can exist for a long time, there develops, nevertheless, a strain whose resolution may ultimately involve a reform of compliance criteria (p. 23).

Political Culture and the Creation of a Unified Education System

When one examines the possibility of merging regular and special education in the light of past and present efforts at school reform, it appears that separate and distinct political systems, cultures, and values are competing for preferential treatment. Due to changing viewpoints and relationships of state, local, and community towards the schools, "new definitions of school purposes, new claims on school resources, new efforts to make the schools more responsive to certain groups and their values are all giving rise to a larger, more weblike set of political relationships surrounding the local schools" (Wirt & Kirst, 1989, p. 2). In short, a policy that calls for the creation of a unified educational school system encompasses Wirt and Kirst's statement and provides a politically viable setting for conflict over who governs and "who gets what, when, and how?"

In an analysis of educational policy issues for the 1990's, Marcoulides and Heck (1990) caution that reform efforts, in an attempt to achieve excellence, must not compromise equality of educational opportunity in the schools. Throughout the 1980's, the essence of reform for regular education centered on quality and excellence, whereas special education reform advocated for equity through an efficient order and rules and regulations.

The unanswered question of the 1990's appears to be, "Can we have both excellence and equity in the schools?"

When framed against Elazar's theory of political culture, even more questions surface: What political system will reign, the marketplace or the commonwealth? Will the schools utilize a power orientation that strives to maintain existing organizational relationships and current system of education? In the discussion of maintaining current educational structures versus examining alternative structural models, will the discussants consider what is morally just and fair? Will regular and special education remain elitist groups, arguing for the traditional, "this is the way we've always done it," dual system of education? Will the schools align themselves against the parents and students, promoting a professional front that inhibits community participation and input, or will they foster the initiative for inclusion without a state or federal mandate? Will the individual stakeholders of the school examine their moral and ethical responsibilities for creating an "equal playing field" among all participants, or will they operate out of self-interest and disdain for the good of society?

All of these questions remain to be answered. When the political rhetoric of inclusion is stripped away, the dilemma that remains is couched in a dichotomy of control versus democracy, and equity versus excellence. The control versus democracy dichotomy alludes to a distinction between compliance through mandates versus choice through conscious and reflective thought. The equity versus excellence decision is a deliberate selection of values, focusing on what is in the best interests of the individual(s) involved. Whose interests are being served? The students, parents, and community, or

educational elites? Regular education professionals, or special education advocates? Will the dividing lines remain?

Allington and McGill-Franzen (1989) project a concerned voice that we, as educational administrators, would do well to pay heed:

> Children come to school expecting to be successful; currently, some are and some are not. In neither case does the child hold the power to determine his or her fate; that power lies primarily with their educational caregivers - teachers and administrators (p. 94).

One of the major concerns about creating a unified school system has been previously echoed in the REI debate. Regular educators have had limited input in the discussion of inclusion. Critics have paralleled this failure to include regular educators in the decision-making process to a wedding, in which the bridegroom, or special educators, has forgotten to invite the bride, or regular educators (Lieberman, 1985). Davis (1989) stresses that before change can occur, an honest and open dialogue between practitioners and researchers must take place. Furthermore, the views and ideas of all stakeholders, including the students, must be heard and valued, and feelings should be appreciated. Thus, the different values and ideologies of the varying individuals, groups, and cultures who are involved in the educational process will be given an equal voice.

We cannot eliminate political cultures that we may deem undesirable. We can, however, be more keenly aware of their existence as well as the influences and values they promote. Furthermore, an understanding of political culture theories will enable us, as a community, to conduct a thorough and well-designed policy analysis of creating a unified, educational system. Such an analysis must precede policy advocacy. In their review of the REI, McKinney and Hocutt (1988) note that advocates of the REI failed to consider

alternative solutions in the research literature, and did not evaluate the REI proposal against other policy-relevant options and criteria. Before we can adequately implement the policy of inclusion and prepare for change, we must rigorously filter the components of a unified educational system through varying theoretical frameworks so that potential negative effects may be minimized.

Will integration work? Lipsky and Gartner (1989) address this question by asking more questions which are specifically relevant to political culture: "What values do we honor? What kind of people are we? What kind of society do we wish to build, for ourselves and for all of our children?" (p. 285). Skrtic (1991b) states that a post-industrial society, as it exists today, will require collaboration, combined skills, and responsibility for learning. To achieve these skills, equity must precede excellence. According to Skrtic (1991b),

> the successful school is one that prepares young people to work responsibly and interdependently under conditions of uncertainty. It does this by promoting in its students a sense of social responsibility, an awareness of interdependency, and an appreciation of uncertainty. It achieves these things by developing its students' capacity for experiential learning through collaborative problem solving and reflective discourse within a community of interests (p. 181, 182).

To adequately deal with any reform agenda, we must carefully examine the values that are driving the current system of education. Such scrutiny should not proceed without the application of theory. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, is calling for "systemic reform" at the local school site (U. S. Department of Education,1993). Before we, as administrators and practitioners, implement the next reform, let us utilize this theory to carefully consider the points of conflict as well as the essential requirements and adjustments that must accompany such efforts. We, ourselves, must learn how to practice

"collaborative problem solving" and "reflective discourse within a community of interests." (Skrtic, 1991b) If the creation of a unified educational system is the answer, so be it. But, in our quest to improve schools, let us not jump on another bandwagon without paying close attention to the predictive abilities of political culture theory. The most important consumer, after all, is the student. By utilizing the theoretical framework of political culture and its underlying assumptions, we will, hopefully, create an educational system that will truly improve outcomes for all students.

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